

THE MIDLAND

A NATIONAL LITERARY MAGAZINE
Published Bimonthly at Iowa City, Iowa

VOL. XVI

MARCH-APRIL, 1930

NO. 2

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN

By CLIFFORD BRAGDON

Sarah Belle was the only child of Doctor Ernest Lanter and Nellie Waldron Lanter of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Her birth was a great misfortune to the Lanters, for they were just beginning to live when their child descended upon them. By her mere presence in this world she deprived them not only of their dreams, but even of their present joys. Indeed, Sarah Belle was so great a disappointment to her father and mother that she cost the one what pale spirit he possessed, and the other her health and charm. Sarah Belle lay heavily upon her parents' hearts, for a child, even as beautiful as Sarah Belle, is a disturbance.

It has to be admitted that the Lanters, during the years that followed their daughter's appearance, did whatever they decently could to evade their misfortune. It has also to be admitted that their success was remarkable. Doctor Lanter became a very busy man in sundry pointless matters, and his wife had the misfortune to grow so chronically indisposed as to regard her daughter, when at all, only through a thin veil of regret. Mrs. Lanter had once been a beautiful woman, but she ceased to attend to her beauty now; there was no money and no incentive. Existence took all her force.

It is small wonder, therefore, that Sarah Belle grew up in uncommon freedom. When she was a tiny child, she played with the Negro children in the fields and with her own imagination. Because the Negro children were her friends and because her imagination was as innocent as

it was vivid, Sarah Belle found the world a very fresh and a very glorious place.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the peculiar nature of Sarah Belle's environment, her girlhood was happy. She found in her world nothing that was not pleasant. This was so for the reason that her world in no way resembled the world of all the large people who looked at her strangely and spoke to her loudly. Her world, up to the time she was twelve, was made up of such qualities as rain and sunlight, Negro children and laughter, little wordless voices and the wind's fingers.

If it is true that Sarah Belle was unconscious of the heavy world that nudges and paws the most of us, it is equally true that this world was unconscious of her — of the real Sarah Belle, that is, whom her one dear friend was later to know so delightfully. None other ever was to see that this girl was straight and tall, that she moved as if already released from this earth in flesh as in spirit. That her eyes were large with a light in them not of this earth, that her mouth was sweet because it knew no hurt, nor any doubt, none other ever was to see. An atmosphere of innocence that was not vulgar comeliness surrounded her. But the friend who was later to understand these things was not yet known to Sarah Belle.

When she was fourteen, there came a great change into Sarah Belle's world. General Grant having been reported shuffling toward Vicksburg, the Lanters, along with many other families, risked the Mississippi to New Orleans. Unfortunately the success of the Doctor in this new city was meager. In fact, the family came to such perilous straits that Sarah Belle had to be sent to the Convent School of Our Blessed Mother. It must not be felt that the temporary loss of their child was a killing sorrow to Doctor and Mrs. Lanter. The fact that there was no charge at the Convent for the accommodation of children up to the age of sixteen mitigated somewhat the pain of separation.

As soon as Sarah Belle got over her longing for all the little black children who had shared her world, she regained her happiness. Indeed, by the end of a week, she was happier than any but the saints deserve to be. There was a reason for this, of course, beyond mere childish resiliency. Sarah Belle had found her dearest friend. She had found God.

All the time the other children were singing and praying to their God, all the time they were walking sedately about with their arms around one another's waists, Sarah Belle was making friends with God. She learned first to listen to Him in the cool voice of the priest, to see Him in the unmoved flame of the candles on the altar, to touch Him in the cross next her skin. In a surprisingly short time, Sarah Belle learned to know God better, more personally, until by the end of the first month, He was her dearest friend, every bit as devoted to her as she to Him. This was the great change that came into Sarah Belle's world.

All the time that she was in chapel or in classes, Sarah Belle lived in anticipation of the evening. The sisters thought her a very dull child, and the children thought nothing of her at all. The truth is that Sarah Belle had her being somewhere else. She went through the service worshipping the convent God, but her heart was waiting for the evening in the suite which she occupied in God's enormous, heavenly hotel. There were so many marvelous attributes of this hotel that it would be tedious to give account of them all. Let it suffice to say that Sarah Belle's little, bare room in the convent school was really a suite with diamond chandeliers, topaz knobs to the doors, and thick green rugs on floors of pure gold.

No sooner was Sarah Belle alone in her room of an evening than a light tap would sound on her door, and God would enter, smiling.

"Good evening, Mademoiselle," He would say, bowing

politely, "I hope everything here is as you would have it."

The little girl would of course reply that it was; whereupon the two of them would sit down and chat until God picked Sarah Belle up, ever so tenderly, and placed her in the great bed with the satin canopy. Then for a little time He would sing songs to her in a beautiful voice. When she was asleep, He would get comfortable in a deep chair and read some great book beside her bed until morning. Sarah Belle was ecstatically happy. The sisters said that she was an idle little feather-brain, but obviously this was not so.

It was thoroughly delightful in the convent, but then it could not go on forever. Before Sarah Belle realized that she had known God for five minutes, she was sixteen years of age and dismissed from the convent, educated.

Sarah Belle returned to the world outside. At first it was like waking up in the morning with a hot sun staring on her face through the window, but eventually she became accustomed to it. She avoided as much of the glare and heat of ordinary day as she was able. This was not a hard thing to do, for the reason that her father was making so little money, and her mother was so constantly indisposed that Sarah Belle had to do all the housework and cook all the meals.

Sarah Belle did not mind working; her friend was still with her. In the morning, while she was sweeping and dusting, washing and cleaning, He helped her a great deal and told her not to mind it, because what we do with our hands does not matter in the least. After chores were done, the two of them would take long walks together; where, Sarah Belle hardly realized. God was as charming a gentleman abroad as in His hotel, and as courteous. He would bow to every little animal He saw along the roadside, and take off His hat to every tree that spoke to Him.

Certainly it was a good thing that Sarah Belle still had

God for a friend. She had no others. People thought her a queer child, or if not actually queer, at least too dreamy for any earthly use. Sarah Belle, of course, had no idea of this. Moreover, another child would have realized that despite the work she was able to do about the house, her parents were seldom overjoyed in her presence. She would have realized that sometimes she annoyed her parents and that always she bewildered them. But then, Sarah Belle had no more real a conception of her parents than of the sisters in the convent. All grown people were alike to her.

It seems a remarkably odd thing, but the truth remains that not even Sarah Belle's parents could understand the beauty of their child. They had eyes no clearer than Sarah Belle's own in this matter, and certainly Sarah Belle was blind.

To be sure she liked her hair, for it was long and brown, and she liked her hands, for they were long and delicate. Yet she too had no conception of her own personal beauty.

But the laws of inevitability dictated that some pale, outward and visible sign should become manifest to someone not quite blind some day. Therefore there was such a manifestation. It happened that her father had for one of his few patients the governor of the state, a reconstructionist governor sent down from New Jersey. His reputation in the North had been anything but noble; and in New Orleans he was generally considered a dirty, yankee rouè, against whom Southern gentlemen should be zealous to guard the honor of their women-folk. Doctor Lanter, of course, scarcely realized that he had any women-folk and if he had, it is doubtful if he would have given up for their threatened honor one of the few paying patients he possessed.

Governor Blodgett, on his part, was drawn to Doctor Lanter for the acceptable reason that in him he found one of the few men in the city who did not scorn to treat him

civilly. He was under no illusions regarding the reason, yet he often felt in need of human intercourse at any price. It became his habit to stop in at the Lanterns to pass the time of the day; and finally one evening, feeling even more than usually alone, he made a formal call. It was upon this occasion that the governor encountered a loveliness that he had long ago ceased to believe in.

He had not known there was a daughter in the house before, and the unexpected vision of Sarah Belle seated in a corner of the parlor, her hands in her lap and her eyes on his as he came into her presence, nearly destroyed his august composure.

Sarah Belle did not utter a word during the whole of the governor's visit. She sat and regarded him with wide-open eyes. Her gaze caused the old man distinct discomfort, for it seemed as if this extraordinary child were examining his smudged and suddenly uneasy soul and at the same time seeing through and beyond him. The good man found it difficult to carry on an intelligent conversation under such a scrutiny and soon rose to go.

It so happened that Sarah Belle showed the governor to the door. During the few moments in the parlor the governor had thought this girl too beautiful and too strange to be alive; but now as she floated across the room and down the dark hall in front of him, he caught his breath. He was an old man, the governor; he had not dreamt dreams for long; and yet, as he turned in the doorway to bid the family good-night, he bent to kiss Sarah Belle's hand. This he did in the best Southern manner without feeling silly in the least.

As for Sarah Belle, despite her apparent unawareness of the governor's existence during the evening, the little girl was greatly charmed with the kiss at parting and took him into her heart at once. Sitting in her room with God after the governor had left, she confided in her friend. She shared with Him the marvel of a delightful old gentleman who, she hoped, would call again.

She explained to Him that here was a person who did not look as if he knew nothing of trees and smiles, birds and songs made up in the early evening. His big white mustache did not frighten her because she knew perfectly well that the little blue eyes above the tips of it knew many pleasant ways of playing games, she said. She could not help laughing as she strutted about the room with her hands clasped out in front of her to make God see how big the governor was, and how he leaned backwards like an old rooster.

God shared her delight and expressed His hope that Belle should find in the governor a friend almost as dear as Himself.

The next evening, much to the surprise and the pleasure of Doctor and Mrs. Lanter, the governor dropped in again.

"I can stay only a moment," he said, catching sight of Sarah Belle smiling shyly at him from her mother's side, "but I want to find out if you could do something for me, young lady."

"Indeed, Sir," Sarah Belle replied, "anything I may."

It turned out that work had piled up so enormously at the State House that the clerks had more than they could do to attend to it all. The governor hoped, he said, that he was not offending Miss Sarah Belle by offering her employment, but would she do some copy-work for him? He hoped she would not disappoint him; her kindness would be of such immense assistance.

Sarah Belle was happy to do anything for such a dear old gentleman. The fact that she was to receive a good sum of money for really very little work did not occur to her, of course. She set to work and in three days she had the copying done in a neat, round hand. The governor having promised to send his personal secretary around for the work, Sarah Belle placed it in a neat bundle on the hall table and waited. Secretly she rather hoped that her new friend would himself call for it, but she was afraid he would not. She knew he must be very busy.

On Friday afternoon Sarah Belle was up in her room engaged in a pleasant conversation with God when the knocker sounded on the door downstairs. For some reason Sarah Belle was startled at the sound. She waited, attentive. The sound was repeated — three even, dead blows. She did not wish to, but for some unaccountable reason, Sarah Belle jumped up and ran down the stairs to answer the door. The sound of the knocker as it banged a third time was, it occurred to her, like the crash of a heavy stick on the body of a young tree. In a moment Sarah Belle was in the front hall. With a vague sense of fear, she slowly opened the door.

The young man who stood on the threshold was in no manner terrifying, yet at the sight of him Sarah Belle started back with her hand over her mouth. There was not the least reason for this; she did it quite involuntarily.

The young man made no effort to reassure Sarah Belle. He merely stood stock-still, looking steadily at her without any expression in his face whatever. His gaze held until Sarah Belle recovered herself sufficiently to whisper, "Won't you come in, Sir?"

The young man crossed the threshold and spoke. "I am Governor Blodgett's secretary. You are Miss Lanter, are you not?"

Again Sarah Belle was beset by a strange feeling of dread; his voice sounded so deep and so black. She wished suddenly that God would happen in and stand by her. God did not, however; and there was nothing for Sarah Belle to do but to nod, with her great eyes fixed on the visitor, and to point to the bundle on the table.

The young man walked over to the table slowly, picked up the bundle and returned to the doorway. When he got there he stopped. "Thank you," he said. Then he did an odd thing. He walked to where Sarah Belle was standing silent, and grasping her by the shoulders, slowly turned her face to him. He did this not roughly; but at

the touch of his hands, so cold and heavy, Sarah Belle shuddered. She wished to run, but she could not. The young man looked into her eyes for perhaps thirty full seconds with his strange, unwavering stare. Then he turned and without a word left the house.

For a time Sarah Belle stood as if still held in that straight gaze. She stared at the door in front of her. She seemed to see there an outline that froze her heart. Presently, however, with a sharp breath, she escaped from her shocked fascination and fled up the stairs.

Fortunately God was there in her room and Sarah Belle was able to rid her heart of the stuff that choked it with a harsh, swollen dread she had never known before. She threw herself on the floor beside the bed upon which God was seated and hid her face in His lap. She cried for a while as though her heart would fail. When God asked her what was the matter, she could not tell Him, though she yearned to. Sarah Belle knew only that something dreadful had happened, that something dreadful was going to happen. Sadly, it was almost midnight before her friend succeeded in quieting the poor child sufficiently for sleep.

In the morning Sarah Belle had lost the barbed hurt of her experience, but of a deep-hearted depression she could not be free. During the three days that followed, there was great mischief within. The world was no longer fresh and clean in the sunlight; God, though He made an effort, could not compose Sarah Belle's heart completely. He too, in fact, seemed somewhat upset about it and left Sarah Belle for long hours at a time when she needed Him most; and when He did come, He remained strangely quiet. Sarah Belle was unhappy for the first time in her life.

Mrs. Lanter was rather put out by her daughter's increased sullenness. Being a woman, she suspected a cause for Sarah Belle's preoccupation, yet she failed utterly to grasp the reason for such a reaction. Young

girls, when they met love face to face for the first time, were transported, not dismal. But then, never mind, she thought, time would transport the child. Ah! A secretary to a governor!

It happened that on the third day after the visit of young Mr. Davenport, the governor himself came again to call upon the Lanters. The governor was no dolt, and he saw at once that there was something troubling the heart of Sarah Belle. He asked that he be allowed to have a few words with her alone. When the Lanters had gracefully retired, he asked her to confide in an old man who had grown fond of her.

At first Sarah Belle would say nothing. At last, however, under the influence of the governor's gentle insistence, the flood gates burst. When she had finished, the governor was a much perturbed man.

"But my dear," he said, "you need never see him again if you don't want to. He can't force himself on you. It's absurd. Why, he has never mentioned such a thing, has he? Well then, brace up, my dear. You are making a mountain out of a molehill." And he added, "If you ever feel that you must, come and talk to me about it. I will help you any way I can, my dear."

The good governor's words and his calm, clear way of looking at things cheered Sarah Belle for two days. Then a terrible thing occurred. Mr. Edward Davenport, the secretary to the governor, came to call upon the Lanters.

Sarah Belle chanced to catch sight of him as he came up the street. Her heart stopped. She knew he was coming to her house, and she knew what he wanted. She knew. He walked along with his head down and his hands hanging quiet at his sides. Sarah Belle was considerably frightened. She reached her hand out behind her, but God was not there to clasp it. She would have hidden had there been any time or any place. The only thing she could do was to kneel down and beg God to come stand beside her.

She was called downstairs in a very few moments. Her mother's voice was unusually animated as she summoned Sarah Belle, but it changed when she caught sight of her daughter creeping down the stairs.

"Whatever ails you, child?" she said, somewhat sharply. "You look like a ghost. Come into the parlor; there's a gentleman to see you. Here, let me fix your hair. Mind, Sarah Belle, behave nicely."

Sarah Belle did not answer her mother, for she could not. Evidently her silence reassured Mrs. Lanter. She piloted her terror-stricken child into the parlor and gently closed the door behind her.

When Sarah Belle entered the parlor, she thought her mother was at her side. Hearing the door close, she turned and made a move as if to throw it open. However, she caught herself. What would be the use now? She would only have to face him another time. She knew that surely.

Sarah Belle turned and saw Mr. Davenport. He had risen from his chair beside the dark window and was standing with his hands hanging quiet at his sides. As if fascinated, Sarah Belle moved slowly toward him. A few feet away she stopped.

"Good evening, Sir," she said.

She was trembling like a leaf, so that she had to sit down quickly. Mr. Davenport, on the other hand, was perfectly composed. He sat down deliberately, watching the little girl. It was only the second time the two of them had seen each other. Mr. Davenport spoke.

"Miss Sarah Belle, I have seen your parents. I am going to marry you."

The young man said this thing very simply with his eyes on Sarah Belle's eyes. Sarah Belle wanted to run up to her room, to take God's hand, for he was not here beside her. But she had no will. The eyes and the cold, black voice clutched her heart. She had known he was going to say these words. In some way, she had known

it, and yet it weighed her down, took the strength out of her as if she had not known it. She could not take her eyes from his eyes. Finally there came one word from her lips.

"No."

It was a whisper, when she had meant to scream it. Mr. Davenport rose. He turned to the window and looked out. Sarah Belle stared at his back. He turned and walked to the door.

"Good night," he said very coolly. "I shall return another time." And he went out.

When Mrs. Lanter entered the room three minutes later, obviously overcome with hope and anxiety, she found her daughter sitting motionless, staring at nothing. To her excited enquiry as to what the young man had said, she received no answer. Her daughter rose as if in a trance and walked across the room, without so much as a glance in her mother's direction, and up the stairs. Mrs. Lanter was quite annoyed for a moment, but she knew better than to break in on a young girl's first experience with love.

Poor Sarah Belle. God did not come at all that night; and the little girl, for she was really a little girl still, slept for only a few hours during the night. As she finally dropped into sleep she soundlessly repeated these words: *He will marry me. He will marry me. He will marry me. He will marry me. He will marry me.*

The next day Sarah Belle's heart was so greatly troubled that she had to go see the governor, her friend. God had not been near her for twenty-four hours. Sarah Belle found the governor at a big desk. He was apparently very pleased to see her, though a little flushed in the face. He rose and closed the door that led out into the corridor, and he pulled up beside him a comfortable chair for Sarah Belle. She was forced to tell everything in one great breath, else she could not have trusted herself. She told the kind old man that his secretary was

going to marry her, that she hated him, that there was nothing to do. The governor, to be sure, had heard all this before. Yet that made no difference; Sarah Belle had nothing else to tell. Again the governor was inclined to make light of the matter at first. There was, as he aptly pointed out, no need for Sarah Belle to marry Mr. Davenport unless she wanted to. Then, however, Sarah Belle told him what Mr. Davenport had said to her. This put an altered light on the thing. The governor sat back and scratched his head, blinking his little blue eyes.

"Well, my dear," he said, evidently puzzled, "I still don't see that I can do anything about it. You're the one. You still don't have to marry a man just because he says so, you know. Refuse him. I am not sure I would recommend him myself. A devil of a good worker, but he never laughs — but here, you just turn him down, little princess. That will fix him. Don't let it bother you. It's taking the flesh off your bones. We can't have that, my dear — we — uh — we can't have that, no — uh — we can't have that."

It happened much as it had before. Despite the fact that Sarah Belle could see the governor had not really understood that she had to marry Mr. Davenport, his cheerful words and his kind manner made her feel better. Moreover, God returned to her and comforted her greatly at this time. But then unfortunately, as Sarah Belle had known all the time that he would, Mr. Davenport came to call at the Lanter house a second time.

This time she tried to hide, but it was too late. She did not see him coming. She and God were busy talking in her room. Suddenly the knocker sounded in that dead, even way. At the sound, God vanished. He faded away with the saddest look in his eyes that Sarah Belle had ever dreamt of. Poor Sarah Belle was panic-stricken. She jumped to her feet and looked this way and that for some means of escape. In desperation she started to

crawl under the bed, but her mother was in the room before she could get all the way under. Her mother would have no nonsense this time, and Sarah Belle was in the parlor in a moment, with the door shut behind her.

As she finally raised her eyes to look at Mr. Davenport, she was petrified to see, looming over the shoulder of the silent young man in the shadows, a great, vague, black shape. At the sight Sarah Belle stepped back against the closed door, staring, staring. There is no way of knowing how long she would have stood leaning there had the governor's secretary made no move. At length, however, he crossed the room to where Sarah Belle was standing. He put his hand on her arm. At the touch, so cold and heavy, the girl almost ceased to breathe. Through a ringing in her ears she heard Mr. Davenport speaking.

"We are to be married on Wednesday next, Miss Sarah Belle. It is all arranged. You will be ready?"

At first Sarah Belle could not answer. She stood hypnotized. The great, black figure had left Mr. Davenport's shoulder as he had crossed the room and had filtered into his eyes. Now it had left them again and was floating up over the space between her and Mr. Davenport and now it was settling coldly, heavily over her, blotting out all she knew. As Sarah Belle slipped quietly to the floor, she heard herself whisper one word, "Yes."

Mr. Davenport, upon seeing Sarah Belle fall, walked to the door and called the Lanter. Doctor Lanter carried his daughter upstairs to bed. While he was doing this, Mrs. Lanter easily explained to the young man that there was nothing to be upset about — all girls fainted under the stress of such an emotion as that aroused by the acceptance of a proposal. Mr. Davenport left without any sign of apprehension and Mrs. Lanter was very happy. Ah! A secretary to a governor!

The next morning, however, Mrs. Lanter experienced

a temporary set-back. Sarah Belle did not appear for breakfast; and when her mother went to her room, she found Sarah Belle asleep on the floor beside her bed, flushed and tossing. Doctor Lanter, who came at his wife's summons, believed that Sarah Belle had caught a chill.

For three weeks Sarah Belle lay in a fever. The wedding had to be postponed a month. At the end of that time, however, thanks to her father's skill, Sarah Belle was strong enough to prepare for her marriage. She was as tractable as could be desired by any mother engaged in the wit-snapping business of wedding preparation. What her mother bade her do she did, and what her mother begged her to remember, she promised to remember. Mr. Davenport came on the last afternoon before the wedding was to take place in order to arrange sundry matters with the Lanters. Sarah Belle maintained a calm though completely silent presence before him. Everything seemed to point to a lovely and impressive ceremony on the morrow. Sarah Belle's quietness and the detached, listless manner she had borne since her recovery seemed to her excited parents but natural under the circumstances.

After Mr. Davenport's short visit, final arrangements were attended to and not until eleven at night was Mrs. Lanter satisfied that the family should retire. By eleven-thirty there was silence in the house.

Since the night that Sarah Belle had been taken ill, God had not been near her, and the lonely child had suffered greatly on that account. This explains how it was that as she lay awake that night, unthinking, unfeeling, she was more than a little moved suddenly to see her friend standing beside her bed. He was speaking to her in a low, excited manner. Sarah Belle sat up straight in bed, her heart beating violently. She listened, and as she listened her eyes grew round. In a moment she nodded her head and began to run about the room, put-

ting on her clothes. In another moment she was out of the house.

As she ran through the little, winding streets, too occupied to be frightened at them, God ran beside her assuring her that Governor Blodgett would take her away. Before she knew it, Sarah Belle was knocking at the governor's door. She did not know that she knocked loudly enough to wake the dead. An old servant finally let her in. At the head of the stairs she saw her dear friend, the governor. He was holding hard to the newel post and swaying a little. Sarah Belle ran past the servant and up the stairs calling to her friend.

"Oh, take me away, take me away. I know you will. You must. He is going to marry me. Please, please. He can't marry me — I hate him, I hate him. He looks at me and I say 'yes.' Take me, please, please — "

This is what the little girl said, though she did not know it. When she got that far, she let go of the governor's knees and fell at his feet.

The good man was greatly shaken. He lifted her light, sweet body in his arms and carried her into his own room. He chafed her wrists and grumbled.

"The young swine," he said, "the young swine. I know, my dear. How can people be so blind? It will kill her — the little child."

When Sarah Belle awoke, she was in the governor's arms, her head against his chest. She was too tired to speak. She lay quiet, breathing in long, vibrating breaths. She was safe now, she felt. She could go for a long sleep now and when she woke up again it would all have been forgotten as a nightmare is forgotten. The governor, her dear friend, was speaking now.

"But you can't go away with me, little princess. I would take you if — if it were possible. I am not a good man, you see. You don't know. You are too good to know yet, my dear. It would ruin your life. I don't care about mine. I would take you if it could help you. I —

I can do nothing for you now, child, but be your friend."

Sarah Belle heard the governor as from a great distance. She was too tired to realize fully what he was saying. The feel of his arms about her kept out his words still. She did not notice that God had gone or that a great, black figure was settling over her again. Simply, she sank a little deeper into the old man's arms and fell asleep.

At length the governor, poor distraught man, could find nothing more to say. He had known for several minutes that Sarah Belle had not been listening. He felt suddenly older than he was and quite sober. He placed the girl gently back upon the bed. Then he went to the door.

"Get the buggy, Jim," he said.

He crossed, then, into his dressing room and put on his clothes. Sarah Belle was asleep, and the sight of her so made him more utterly miserable than he could remember having been since he was a young man. His sins crowded up and looked him coldly in the face. He felt infinitely old, infinitely helpless.

When he had finished dressing, he tip-toed quietly back into the room where Sarah Belle lay asleep on his bed. He picked her up without waking her, and without waking her he carried her down the stairs and out to the carriage.

When she was taken into her own house, Sarah Belle was put to bed at once. The governor spent a hard hour in the parlor with the Lanters; and when he left, his shoulders were bent and he had no heart within him.

On the following day Sarah Belle was married. She was not ill again, her parents were relieved to find. In fact, she rather surprised her mother by appearing for breakfast in the morning as though nothing had happened. In view of this normal behavior, Mrs. Lanter refrained from any unpleasant comment.

Sarah Belle did not know anything about it when she

was married. God was not there. Indeed, she failed to see even the governor, though he stood in a conspicuous place. It was not until years later that Sarah Belle had a clear picture of what took place at her wedding. She was at the time motivated entirely by a great, black figure that clutched her by the shoulders and turned her this way and that way. God was gone, so that things just happened — not to her really, but to some unknown girl she watched and feared for with a dead fear.

God came back to Sarah Belle for a moment — during the night of the day she was married. He appeared suddenly in front of her eyes in a great flash and then was gone again. Belle cried out and sank down into the black pit that God's disappearance made in the darkness. God never came back to Sarah Belle after that. From the moment of His disappearance forever, she waited for Him without any real hope, without any real pain in her heart. Naturally, Sarah Belle was very lonely on that account.

THREE POEMS

By HANIEL LONG

DUSK

These were the things we talked of — how dusk sweetens
the meadows,

How a gale refreshes the shore, and a dip in the brook
the body.

These things and their like — nothing else — never a
word

Of shadows descending, seeking us.

We had left forever the old house

Where shadows came down the stairs like flesh-hunters,
And mumbled over bones in corners. There is nothing
now to fear

In the black far-reaching arms of dusk.

HARVEST

Today in the hayfield, dog-tired and leaning
A moment on his pitchfork in the sun
(Sweating freely, feeling the hot drops run
Down back and loins) and glad with a white gull shining
Over the blue lake, he thought about the meaning
Of work and fields and vistas and white gulls
And days and nights and death and miracles,
Till he divined the secret of divining.
His mind with a mind's unbelievable speed, traversed
The year gone by, and he was well content
And grateful for the year, because of those
Who had shared the joy with him and shared the thirst
Life gives mankind to harvest. Now he knows
That he needed to share not knowing what life meant.

FROM NEW YORK TO NEW MEXICO

When breezes stir these leaves, or when the lake
Begins to move and murmur by the shore,
Whether I lean at evening in the door,
Or in my brother's sun-drenched meadows make
Alfalfa, I can hear the small bells shake
Upon your house, two thousand miles away,
And feel the strong sun over Santa Fé
Deluging me till I disintegrate.
Are your bells temple bells? Or have you cows
In airy pastures where the sight is blind?
That tinkling is so much like kine which browse
On far-off slopes, that I would go behind
As barefoot long ago I followed Bess
Towards green hills lost long since, but here no less.

SMART WORK

By THOMAS MURTHA

He was on hands and knees, in the darkness of the old kitchen. Behind him the window made a luminous space, with a chair-corner visible against it. The draught was cold. He was waiting for ten minutes, till the possible noise of his entry had died away. And he could only peer into blackness in that time. He didn't know what might be in his way; he had never come through to this room from the barber-shop.

He felt a gas-stove beside him. It was greasy to the touch. Now he would have dirty hands from being on the floor, he thought.

The darkness shook with the rumble of a passing street-car. It was nearly half-past two, he concluded. The noise faded. And there was nothing now save the whistling of the blood in his veins. And the cold air from the window made a whispering at times. He had gone possibly six feet from the window, and was only crouched there. He had a lot to do yet.

He moved ever so softly, as fellows always did, he thought. He parted the curtains very slowly, and squinted through into the semi-darkness of the barber-shop, with the one eye close to the aperture, and the dusty smell of the drapes in his nostrils.

The glass above the shop-blind let in a bit of light from the street-lamp, and left the shop dim, so that his eye rapidly got used to it, and he could make out the chairs and the couch. He could get a faint smell of tonics and soaps. The shop was almost bright after the dark kitchen.

The curtains swung aside noiselessly. With his mouth open, unconsciously at first, in the effort to be silent, he stepped easily forward into the larger room of the shop. He got a feeling of comfort from being in it, and out of the dark of the former. He felt more at home there; that

was because he had been often there, he thought. And his mind wandered to hair-cuts, jokes, rates, and how the old barber used to be pleasant.

A board creaked under his left foot, and he got hastily off it. But a second creaked under his rapidly-moving weight. That was a mistake. He stood, balancing, till the phantom echoes of the squeak should die. His throat had grown dry.

There was a creaking at the front of the shop, and a shadow flickered in the glass above the blind. He was badly frightened as he stared, till he saw it was a loose corner of the awning flapping.

He was alongside the stairway, and going easily. He could distinguish the till on the shelf.

A noise came down from the floor above, and he moved with inaudible steps to crouch beneath the stairway. The noise had been the creaking of floor-boards, he reflected. He glanced at the curtained door-way, estimating chances of getting through to the darkness of the kitchen. But the stairs faced that curtained door-way. He crouched beneath the stairs, his throat dry once more.

Little noises seemed filling the dark. Little scrapes and creaks caught the strained ears. Somebody must be standing at the head of the stairs, and, he felt very sure, peering downward. He thought of the boards over his head, hiding him from discovery. If he were caught, it would be tough. How they would take hold of him! He pictured old Burns' look of surprise at discovering who he was. "Cliff? No! Cliff? No! It ain't you?" he would say. Maybe he would be swearing, and too excited. It would be a nasty business, being caught. The old boy would get a good worrying, though, thinking about the cops hearing he was a bookie. It was a sure thing that he wouldn't like that. But the old fellow could not be depended upon. He certainly could not.

Light foot-falls came in from the kitchen, two slight pats, and he quit thinking. He held his breath. The cur-

tains moved a little. He hoped he was imagining. Then he heard the purr of a cat. It must have come in through the open window. He crouched still, very relieved, and watched the cat.

There came a startling gurgle of water splashing in the basin up-stairs, a click of a glass being put down, and then creaking of floor-boards. That had made him quit thinking again. The sounds ended very suddenly. But he waited, crouched, and watching the cat, thinking that maybe the person up-stairs was still listening. Maybe the noises had been only bluffs. The person may have come silently back to the head of the stairs. He pictured old Burns standing up there, listening. He would be wiggling the ends of his moustache. He would look funny with his hair upset.

His legs began to ache with the cramped position and he had to move to relieve them. The cat approached, and purred and rubbed against him. He waited, half-stooped, delighting in the feel of the cat against his legs. But he couldn't move, for a time at least, because of the person upstairs.

A singing rush outside meant a car passing, and he wondered idly if it were one of the fellows from the garage. He caught the noises of distant street cars, growing and then lessening. The light on the wall from the upper part of the window was steady. At one corner was the flickering of the shadow of the loose part of the awning, shaking in the breeze.

He caught a distant striking of a bell, and in a panic he peered at his watch; it was a quarter to three. Time was going slowly. But he would be able to move soon.

The purring cat lay at his feet. He had to step over it on the way to the till. The drawer was hard to open. But he got it with a lucky twist of the wire. The roll of bills would be some at least of what the old fellow had taken. He mentally glimpsed Burns' grin; he always grinned when taking a bet. He never did when making a

payment. He had grinned when explaining he had not put the fifty on Grampus. God, hadn't he been mad at the old crook. A nine-to-one shot. And the old fellow had grinned that sickening grin and said, "Sorry, Cliff, but I—I didn't get it in time. I didn't get the bet placed." The roll would help pay some of that, at least.

The floor overhead started to creak again, and he crouched beneath the stairs in four steps. The bills, crammed into a pocket, made an uncomfortable wad. Something started to pound in his throat. He had a right to that money, no matter what came. It was his. It was only a small part of what should have been his at that.

The little noises started coming down to him again. The person was at the head of the stairs. The darkness, penetrated by the unseen peering, was dangerous. If there was a gun up-stairs, he might get shot. Crouched there, with muscles cramping, he wondered what getting hit by a bullet was like. If the old guy tried to use a gun, he'd crush his throat to a string.

Five minutes went by. He looked at his watch. A booming bell scared him badly with its first stroke, and then he realized it was the tower-bell on the police station around the corner, not a hundred yards away.

In the seconds that separated the strokes he realized that the stairs over his head were creaking as somebody descended. A warmth flooded all through him. He crouched, with muscles tensed. The cat that had been at his feet got up and rubbed against the corner of the stairs. His eyes, now well accustomed to the dark, could see.

The person was suddenly at the foot of the stairs; he could see the gray form swinging into view, and cutting off the sight of the curtains at the door. It was a hazy form in the gloom. Both hands seemed empty. It was the old barber. It was a good thing he lived alone. He thought of how the fellows used to tease the old fellow

about getting married. "Pop," they called him. Somebody had said the old bird was married, and had a family someplace. He was too tough for a family. Too smooth.

He watched him, standing there, suspicious of course, his form indistinct in the gloom, and him staring at the front window. Muscles grew pained from the crouch. And the time went.

The old fellow turned and went into the back room, and he could hear him moving around there. And then he was back. He had not seen the open window. That was luck. God, that was lucky.

The hazy form stepped forward to mid-floor, and peered ahead. Then, he went on and walked around the chairs. It was almost like waiting for a hair-cut, except for the darkness. Old Pop could not see very well, apparently, judging from his peering manner. It was awful to wait, cramped from crouching, and expecting the old fellow to put the lights on. If he did turn them on, a cop would come. Pop would get the surprise of his life if he did turn them on.

He came toward the back of the room. And then he stood, not three feet away. His gaze seemed to be coming round, like the ray of a light. It was almost visible. The old fellow was taking in everything. He crouched further back into the corner, and something started to pound again in his throat. That money was his, all right, and not Pop's. He watched.

Everything snapped when the short figure of the old fellow stooped as though to see beneath the stairs. It was like the snapping of feelings when one gets madly into a fight. It wasn't an instant before he was standing very close to the old fellow. And in the last part of the second he realized that the old fellow had not been looking in his direction; that his back was turned.

But if he tried to get away, he would be heard.

The old barber turned slowly. It was like hitting a purring cat that one has been petting. But he had to hit.

And his fist stung from the blow. Hazily he saw old Pop's face. He was certain he had not been recognized.

The old man staggered. He had an impulse to catch him. The shuffling of the feet was very loud, and he glanced at the door, half-expecting somebody to come running. But the old man sat down upon the couch, as though he were going to hold his face in his hands. Then he slid to the floor. He should have been straight about the bet anyway. A fellow had to live. Getting a straight thing that turned out to be a nine-to-one shot, and then that old fool come simpering, "I didn't get it in time!" He had got it, and kept the whole roll to himself.

The old fellow lay curled up. There was nobody at the door, nobody at the window. He peered at the street, careless now of any possible noises indoors. Then he tiptoed leisurely into the back kitchen, careless of squeaking floor-boards. He paused before getting out the window; the front room was still. He had a fleeting wonder as to where the cat had gone.

Outside, in the cement-floored yard, he felt the piercing chill. There was snow that had fallen since he had entered the shop.

The window went down with a muffled thump. He pressed close to the wall, suspicious of the windows in the neighboring house; he expected to see heads of watchers there.

The creak of the gate in the high board fence sounded too loud. The yard beyond, leading to the street, provided good refuge for it was crowded with moving-vans. He edged toward the street, crouching, and alert. The fresh snow muffled his footsteps.

The street was deserted. The street-lamps shone coldly, and the circles of yellow light fell on the unbroken whiteness of the fresh snow. The car-tracks with their parallel black lines looked very neat.

Up and down the street he could see nothing moving. He stared for some minutes at suspicious shadows that

might have sheltered the cop on the beat. But he said at last, "Hell, there's nothing," and moved up the street.

It wasn't so cold after he got walking. His boots made little sound in the snow, so little sound there was no echo. Bare pavement would have made his footsteps ring. He was lucky it had snowed. And if he did meet a cop, he would keep on moving at a business-like pace, as though he were going about his own business. They wouldn't bother him.

The sky had scattered clouds with bare spots where stars showed. It was a snappy night, and made him think of the warmth that would be in the house. He pulled his taxi-cap lower.

Up one block to the side-street, he counted his footsteps in an unthinking way. But all the while he was watching for the coming shadow of the cop.

After turning into the side-street he walked more boldly. The roll of bills in his pocket felt bulky, and he wished they were folded neatly.

He was thirsty, and he thought of how he used to eat snow when he was small. Here, his hands would leave a mark. His feet were leaving marks; that struck him into panic. And it wasn't snowing any more. He looked anxiously at the scattered clouds; they were clearing away. It would not be snowing any more. And his tracks were plain; he could see them for some distance back. He should be walking where there was no snow.

He was at the corner when he thought of following the verandahs, where it would be bare. Crossing the doors and windows would be the danger; if anybody saw him, there would be trouble.

He climbed over an iron fence running anglewise from a house-corner to the street. Easily he let himself down on the verandah, and went along crouching. If anybody saw him, there would be a hot time.

He stopped between verandahs to scrutinize the street. There was no shadow of a cop. It was slow going, when

he had to watch like that. If they ever saw him, they would certainly pull him up. God! And Betty at the flat, in bed, not knowing anything!

He came to a laneway, and he crossed it on tiptoe. He had to do that twice. He accidentally kicked one milk bottle, and he hustled across the next verandah as the bottle rumbled across the floor. He even crouched for some minutes, wondering if somebody were not peering from some window. He made up stories to tell them at the house in case that they should see him entering; they would cover their curiosity about his movements by teasing.

It was tiresome work, going the three blocks and a half. At the house he had to cross the lawn and mount the steps because of the lattice-work at the end of the verandah. It was good to be home anyway; it was good, too, to see nothing stirring on the street.

He took some minutes opening and closing the door. Somewhere in the house a water-tap dripped, and he found himself listening cautiously to it. The warmth was good to feel.

Carefully avoiding the hall-table, he tiptoed to the stairs to get his foot on the carpet tread. There were fourteen steps. The eleventh had a squeak and he stepped over it to the twelfth, but he went on counting eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. His foot came down with a heart-stilling thump. He waited, holding breath. And then he went on, remembering he was in the house at last, and that old Mrs. McBride would be asleep anyway, and that if she did hear, she would know his step. He turned to wondering if Betty were awake.

The bedroom was chill, for she always had the window raised. She was an irregular heap in the bed. The gloom was not thick, he thought, and he would not bother turning on the light. It might awaken her. Besides, the room faced the street. He spent a couple of minutes looking out, but he saw only the dark columns of trees in the steady shine of the lamps. Nothing stirred.

He tried to avoid thinking of the wadded bills in his pocket. He did not touch them, but left them in the pocket of his trousers on the floor. Maybe he would feel better in the morning, and would do something with them. He wanted to get to bed and get rested, now. The memory of the old fellow was unpleasant. But in spite of the dislike, the memory of the old fellow sliding to the floor kept running through his mind.

He got slowly beneath the quilts, and curled up as far as there was any room. He felt Betty stirring. He waited for her to start talking. And meanwhile he thought of old Pop sliding. It was not restful. The very creaking of the couch-springs returned. He recalled how he had liked to sit on that couch while waiting his turn.

Betty turned sleepily and said, "You're late, Cliff."

He pretended sleepiness, so that she repeated the words. He said, "I had to take a fellow to Brampton."

She waited a while. "What's it like out?"

"All right." He tried to be curt, so that she would keep quiet.

"Cold?"

He remembered the snow quite suddenly. "It snowed a little."

"Snowed, did you say?" Her lively interest in the fact reawakened his worry, and he said, "Yeh," with a gritting of teeth and a body-toss. He felt her settle again to rest, and he felt sorry he had been short and curt. After all, she was Betty.

He could hear her raise her head suddenly. "Didn't you want something to eat, Cliff?"

He tried to make up for his former answer, and yet be final. "No."

"But after that drive?"

"I'm all right." He humped himself in a decisive way, his back to her. And he felt her settling to rest. He didn't want to have to listen to anything. There was

the other thing, the memory of the old fellow. Betty didn't know what he was doing for her. At least, it was partly for her. And she would make a big row if she knew. A fellow can't tell everything. That four-fifty would have settled Stacey's note, and seen the living-room stuff all settled for, too. The whole business would not have been so bad if he had been single. But it costs something to live and keep a wife, and be half comfortable too. Burns got what was coming to him. The roll would see them partly clear anyway.

Poor Bet. She was a good kid. But he could listen to her talking some other time.

He shifted to another position. It was going to be hard work to get to sleep, like after drinking much coffee. Betty was breathing regularly. He tried to think of their courtship, the year previous. Car-rides; going to the Exhibition; walking in Queen's Park; the day they had taken the aeroplane ride over the city; Betty's mother with her slight, high voice, and criticisms, and his hating her. The same old lady would talk if this ever got out. Oh, wouldn't she! And then his thoughts swung into the feared groove, that of the old fellow sliding to the floor. He said, "God," and twisted a few times.

But there was the roll of bills. He had not counted it. He wasn't scared. Still, he would have time in the morning in the bathroom where he would not be interrupted. He fell to wondering how much there was, and imagined there was a great deal. He felt almost certain there was enough for Stacey's note, that had enabled them to get the living-room suite. He wanted to swear aloud every time he thought of how, because of Burns, he had missed four hundred and fifty. The note would have been a drop in the bucket with that amount in his pocket.

"Well, anyway," he thought, "I'll go ahead and get Betty her rug. Take a chance." Wouldn't Betty be surprised, when they delivered that rug she had wanted for

the living-room. She would give him a hug and say, "Oh, Cliff!"

It made him feel so good when she kissed him of her own accord. Some of the fellows kept saying at the garage, "You're only a woman's meal-ticket when you're married. And if you're a poor one, they'll leave you." What if he was only a meal-ticket? It made him feel good anyway. And what else was there for a fellow to do?

It was going to be good to have her thank him for the rug. She'd say, "You're wonderful, Cliff," and then she would add, most likely, with her own little humour, "Sometimes." And then they would have a tussle.

But he had been kind of shrewd, walking on the verandahs, like that. He had a trembling in the throat and around the heart at thinking of the result if he had failed to think of his tracks. He wondered where the cops were now, and whether old Pop was trying to help them out.

Well, there was the first trick. The last one, too. He had done it because old Burns deserved it, and because he had to get his own. It was smart work. Old Pop couldn't get away with everything. Not on him, anyway! And how the papers would talk about it! "Robber vanishes into thin air. Clever visitor foils police." He imagined himself hearing Betty read it out. It wasn't so bad.

If she really knew what had happened she would approve, certainly. He would feel better about it too, if she knew. But he would never tell, not for a long time. He pictured himself telling her, years later. Even then, she would want to send conscience money to the old boy. She was like that; always for the loser.

The dulled sounds of Mrs. McBride's grandfather clock striking four o'clock came. But his eyes were wide open. Bet was breathing heavily. He turned a few times, looking for a comfortable position. . . .

At first he fancied he was dozing in a chair in the

garage office, waiting for a call, and that the gang were around, talking. There was a rumbling, and the scraping of a chair. Then he went back into the dark.

Then, suddenly, he had his eyes wide open, and he was looking at the ceiling with its rain-spot, at the lace-curtains, the tie-rack beside the dresser. The chair-creaking in the rim of his attention came to the very centre of his thoughts. Why was Betty sitting in a chair at such an hour? It must be still early.

The chair-creaking turned into a door-squeak. And he was aware of Betty still sleeping beside him.

Holding his old dressing robe tightly across, he peered through the door into the sleepy-looking face of the old landlady, Mrs. McBride. She looked rough and untidy.

"Man to see you, Mr. Barker." She looked questioningly.

"Thanks, Mrs. McBride." And ignoring the woman's silent question, he stared at the man behind, a man with a hard stare, and a moustache trimmed so carefully he looked cranky. The black coat and the hard collar were unforgettable. The eyes remained hard, level; there was no friendliness. The voice was easy. "I'd like to see you."

Cliff thought of forcing a smile, but decided the fellow had no right to one. Besides, what the hell was he doing around so early?

"What did you want?"

"Take it easy, unless you want to awaken the house. We're the police. You were certainly smart. It was smart work on your part." The speaker had a curl to his lip.

Cliff gave up. He felt hot in the face. And he thought of Pop sliding to the floor, and the bills. He gave up. He felt very hot. "How did you come here?"

"You'd better hurry. But I'll let you know you left your tracks in lanes, and in front of the house. Will you hurry?"

Cliff looked down the stairs, wondering. The last

steps of the old landlady died away suddenly; she had been trying to listen, most likely. The man opposite was a hard-looker. He was, certainly. And then he discovered a second man down the hall.

He turned back into the room. Betty still slept. And he made the instant resolve to keep it quiet from her.

He heard the police in the hall as he dressed, and he wondered bitterly if they peeked through the key-hole. He thought of them all the time, till he felt the roll of bills in his pocket.

He was combing his hair when Betty awoke. "Where are you going?" she said, though she was still nearly asleep.

"I got a call. I'll be back sometime. You needn't wait." He did no turn from the mirror, through fear she would see his face. And there raced through his mind the truth, "They got you on the lanes. You left tracks. That was sloppy. Sloppy work!"

"Don't you want any breakfast?"

He had guessed she would say that. "No. I'll be all right. Don't worry." And feeling downhearted, he looked at her as he pulled on his cap.

"Pull your cap more to the other side." She smiled up at him. "Poor old Cliff! They're working you too hard."

He kissed her hard, and squeezed her hand. When she said, "What's it doing out?" he looked from the window for the first time. It was bright and warm-looking. A drop of water fell from the window-sash; the snow would not last very long.

"Don't wait for me then." And he went out, remembering the smile and trying to hold the resolve to look directly at the men who had caught him because they were smarter. Through the closing door, he caught a glimpse of Betty settling down, no wiser. It made him stare hard at the door for a moment before facing the plainclothes men.

TWO POEMS

By GLENN WARD DRESBACH

COLTS

Let them arch their proud necks
And toss their glossy manes,
Let their hoofs shake sunlight
Along the windy lanes.
Soon enough will necks ache
Beneath the heavy reins,
The gloss be streaked with dried sweat,
The hoofs be heavy, deep
In plowed ground, and night bring
The bedded stalls . . . and sleep.

Let them roll their wild eyes
At clouds and passing wings,
Let their velvet lips splash
Bright water of the springs.
Soon enough will eyes feel
The dripping sweat that stings,
The lips be dry with hot breath,
Beyond the pasture bars —
Then bedded stalls, a dark roof . . .
And the remembered stars!

FLOODED BROOK

The spring that feeds the brook is covered
With muddy water, after the rain,
Tumbling down from the ruts and hollows
Into the course through the clouded plain.

The little brook is itself no longer —
It seems to think that its voice is thunder
And that it is better shouting over
The bridge that it had been singing under.

This is a strange delusion of power —
For over the arch of the bridge is the arch
Of the sky, and the flood from the brook will vanish
With hardly a stir in the river's march.

The ruts and the hollows have nothing to offer
After the flood has rushed on its way . . .
Only the little spring that was hidden
Under the flood has power to stay.

WATER WITCH

By ROBERT HUNT

Occult streams call her, purling underground,
Lapsing along green halls of drowsing shoal,
Dribbling slow blunted notes that bulge and roll,
Grown bulbous in a vacuum of sound.
The slim birch wand will twitch. She will declare,
"There must be water underneath this land
Because the switch is jiggling in my hand."
Her eyes will fix upon a spot and stare.

Interior ears attend an undertone
Ascending faintly from that deep terrain
Which is the flesh's dark ancestral home;
Creeping, like grass from under root and stone,
Along the edges of the heart and brain . . .
The wistful stirring of the ancient womb.

ONCE UPON A TIME

By ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY

She came every evening to the Pont des Arts, to stroll back and forth or to sit for a while on one of the benches. "This is me and this is Paris," she kept whispering to herself. After almost two weeks, there was still that feeling like a flutter of wings in her breast.

They had told her how it would be, back home in Kansas. Several of her fellow-teachers from the high school had come over in other summers. They had laughed at the reading she did to prepare for the trip. "When you get there you'll forget about *history*," they said. And sure enough, all that Paris had been in the past, and all that *she* had been, seemed now no more than a preparation for their coming together.

The bridge, that was not far from her hotel, summed up for her this beauty and mystery and romance that her life had never held before. Often she lingered there for whole hours, from the time when the low sun made the river westward a sheet of shining silver to the time when the Seine was black velvet flowing away beneath her feet.

On this bridge there were none of the charging, shrieking taxis. It was more like a room than a line of passage. People came here for pleasure. In the sunset light, painters, working rapidly, held a little group about each easel. Then the throngs of workers came trooping homeward from under the arches of the Louvre. Later, when it grew dark, mothers and fathers brought children here to play. Tired workmen sat smoking; women gossiped; old folk nodded and slept. And of course there were lovers. Seeing them sit pressed close together, the girl felt an ignoble desire to watch them covertly. She made herself move away; but she knew then that she was lonely. This was a city of lovers, and the thirty-five years of her life had known nothing of love.

She thought of that first warm bright Sunday in the Bois de Boulogne. She had strolled for hours along the winding paths through the woods and by the shore of the river, and everywhere there were lovers. She met them face to face on the paths, walking in a close embrace. She spied them in green coverts, lying side by side on the grass. Even the children at play were quick with endearments; and middle-aged fathers and mothers looked on with their arms about each other. It was a world where feeling was not ashamed of itself.

Walking that day in the Bois, the girl had suddenly laughed aloud. She had thought of the teachers' meetings at home, where measures of correction were devised to check the boy-and-girl intimacies that sprang up so bewilderingly each spring. She had thought of the principal's bleak gray face, and of the consternation that would surely come upon it if he were here with her now, to see these things. And because there was no consternation, she was sure, on her own face, nor in her heart, she laughed aloud.

But it was laughter with a quick catch in its throat. Her own life seemed very empty in the face of this fullness of living. Books and classrooms and a round of dreary boarding-houses — that is all she had known. She had never attracted men. Even in school days she had had no boy friends. No man had ever shown a desire to be near her.

She had come, back home, to accept this fact as something inevitable. She wasn't pretty. She knew that. No matter how she fixed her hair, she wasn't pretty. And men were attracted by prettiness. She must be content to be one of the drab unwanted workers of the world.

But now there was a new impulse of rebellion within her. She wasn't content any longer; she wanted more and more of life. If only she could stay here a while, with this beauty and mystery and romance always about her! Then, she knew, the warmth and brightness that were

within her would flow out upon her face, and perhaps no one would notice that she was plain.

Under the drive of this longing, she got up quickly from her bench and walked along the bridge. Leaning against the railing, she fought it out with herself. Of course, she couldn't stay in Paris. In three days she was to join the group for the tour across France, Switzerland, and Italy. In two months she would be back in Kansas. The old life was waiting there to engulf her. She would remember Paris as a vague promise that had been withdrawn.

From the railing, she looked down upon the lower quay. The day had been warm, and people were enjoying the freshness of the river's breath. On a pile of building stones unloaded from a barge, a man in a rough blouse and baggy trousers was sitting with a bare-headed girl. He took her head against his shoulder and bent to kiss her. Then they got up and strolled away, hand in hand, into the growing dark. The girl on the bridge stood watching them. She envied them profoundly. They were the ones for whom such nights were made.

She crossed slowly to the other side of the bridge and sat again, her knees against the wire railing, looking down the river. There was still a faint flush in the sky beyond the last tower of the Louvre. A shining river-boat came under the dark arch of the Pont du Carrousel. If one listened closely, there was the soft sound of the streaming water.

Some one came and sat on the other end of the bench. She did not turn to look. Presently a man's voice said, "It is beautiful, isn't it?"

The surprise of hearing English words made her forget, for an instant, that they came from a stranger. She turned to him quickly. "Oh, it is beautiful!"

All her ardent delight in the new riches was in her voice. She remembered at once that this was not the voice for strangers, and when he said, "It's the choice spot of Paris, in the evening," she made no answer.

But he went on easily, "I saw you here an hour ago. When I'm in Paris, I spend a lot of time here, too." He gave a low laugh, as if in apology for such simple tastes.

She liked his laugh. She turned again to look at him, wondering if she would remember seeing him before. He was a young man, and his eyes were merry. He looked nice, she thought.

"You *are* an American, aren't you?" he was asking.

This time it was the dull flatness of her "Yes" that displeased her. After all that Paris had taught her, couldn't she be anything but her old shut-in self, shrinking from strangers, afraid of adventure, afraid of life?

He was giving her a stern glance of mock disapproval. "All good Americans should be at the Folies-Bergère."

"Aren't you an American too?" she asked, shyly.

"That's just it. I can see so many of 'em at home that it seems foolish to flock with them over here."

She joined, a little uneasily, in his laugh. She wanted to be comradely. She wanted to be the person that Paris had made her, not her old drab self.

"Look at that string of barges," he said now. "Those folks have the right place to live, on these warm nights."

As the barges passed beneath them, drawn by the straining tug, one could still see, in the failing light, women on the open deck astern cooking or washing dishes or playing with children, while the man laid his weight against the rudder pole, to guide them into the dark archway.

The young man was telling her where the barges were going, the Canal St.-Martin and the Bassin de la Villette.

"In Paris, are they, those places?" She tried to speak easily, lightly; but she heard the tenseness of effort in her voice.

"You certainly want to see the Canal St.-Martin!" he told her. "It's a good deal more alive than the Panthéon."

"Have you been here long, in Paris?" At least, she

could speak now without that quavering uncertainty; but there was still in her voice that flat tone of formality — as if he were a visitor to her classroom.

"I haven't been here long this time. In fact, I just got in this morning. But I've been over on this side for quite a while. I'm doing some work at the University of Lausanne. And every time I get a bit of vacation, I run up here. Il n'y a que Paris."

"I don't understand just what that means," she said, "but I think I can guess."

"You don't know French?"

"Oh, just a word or two . . . nothing, really."

"How long have *you* been here?"

And she told him then, told him the day and hour of her arrival, what she had first seen, what she had thought of it, how the wonder of the place had more and more seized hold of her spirit, how it had grown to signify for her all that had been missed in life and now was found at last, to be held for these few brief days at least. It was easy, and very good, to talk like this, out here in the dark, to some one who understood.

He came over to sit nearer to her on the bench and he said just the right little word when it was needed, to show the fullness of his understanding. There were, of course, things that she could not tell him, the deeper things, the things that she had felt just now when she looked down from the bridge upon the lovers; but still she poured out to him more of herself than she had ever given to any one before. Wasn't this Paris, and hadn't she learned that there is only life for those who give themselves to it?

Suddenly something caught her in her flood of self-revelation, something, perhaps, of her old self lifting up its head from the past. She felt ashamed now, and afraid. She got up quickly.

"It's getting cold. And it's late. I'll have to go."

He was standing beside her. "I'm glad you told me all that," he said gently. "I like to know how it affects

other people, getting over here. It did about the same thing to me as to you."

She laughed nervously. "I must have bored you terribly with my chattering!"

"No," he said. "It was just like hearing myself talk . . . and that is always pleasant, you know."

His hand was on her arm for an instant. "Can't I walk with you, wherever you're going?"

"Oh, my hotel is only a few steps from here, in the rue de Seine."

"But if you don't mind . . . ?" He fell into step beside her.

"Won't it be taking you out of your way?"

"My way!" He gave a rueful laugh. "My way is anywhere, tonight. I'm an apache, for the time being."

She halted to ask, "What do you mean?"

"Well, I had a rather unpleasant experience on the train last night. It's my own fault. I ought to know better by this time than go to sleep. But I did go to sleep, and when I woke up I found my pockets pretty well cleaned out. Purse, passport, baggage checks . . . everything gone."

"Why," she cried out, "what can you do?"

"Oh, it isn't as bad as it sounds," he assured her. "I had enough loose change to get off a cable for home. I've been hanging around Cook's most of the day, waiting for the answer. As soon as that comes, I'll be all right again."

"But what will you do tonight?"

"It's nice and warm," he said, with that merry smile.

"You mean, you have no place to go?"

"Oh, I'll sit here on the bridge a while longer. Then I'll walk about a bit. Morning comes early this time of the year."

"But you can't do that!" She snapped open the bag that hung from her wrist. "Here, I'll lend you some money."

"No, please," he begged. "I don't want you to do that."

"Of course I will! . . . Why, how can you get anything to eat?"

"That *has* been a bad feature of the experience," he admitted.

"And you haven't had anything today?"

"I had a cup of coffee this morning. And I've had my cigarettes. The villain left me those."

"But you must be terribly hungry! . . . And sitting there listening to me *talk*!"

"I wasn't thinking of it then," he said.

She moved on quickly. "But come now! We'll get something right away." She led the way under the arches of the Institut, out into the narrow twistings of the rue de Seine. "There's a place near the Ecole des Beaux-Arts," she said.

He laughed gleefully. "So you know that place too, do you?"

She had been there but once or twice. The gaiety of the student groups had rubbed a trifle too harshly on her loneliness. But now . . . it was the right place.

She insisted upon his ordering bountifully.

"Haven't you heard," he protested, "that starving people shouldn't break their fast too violently?"

"Oh, you can eat," she said. And he did. So did she. She felt as hungry as if she too had gone all day fasting.

There were the noisy groups that she remembered at the tables about them. But now she didn't have to watch them. Now she was a part of the gay life. Now a lone stranger at one of the tables might be envying *her*.

She had lost all sense of constraint now, all thought that she was a school teacher from Kansas dining here in the Latin Quarter of Paris with a stranger. She was happy, and that was enough.

They talked of all manner of things that concerned themselves. He told of his university life in Europe, and

she told of her school days at home. It wasn't mere talk, but a welling-forth of life.

At last, for all of her urging, he could eat no more.

"Remember, I haven't been penniless for a *week*," he reminded her playfully.

Under cover of the table she passed a bank-note to him.

"Will that be enough? I can't get used to this French money."

He looked at the note. "It's just a loan, you know."

"We can settle our accounts some other day," she answered.

The waiter was coming toward them now. She said, "Give him a great big tip, please." And she smiled into the young man's eyes.

From the restaurant, they went back to the Pont des Arts. Their steps seemed to lead them there without their knowing. They sat again on the same bench. He sat close beside her. She could feel the pressure of his arm against her shoulder. They looked down into the streaming black of the river and they did not speak for a while.

"It's a shame you're going away so soon," he said at last.

She had been thinking that perhaps she might *not* go. The arrangements were made; the tour was paid for; but she would rather give up all that than — this . . . She would think of it tomorrow. Maybe she would go to the office to see about a postponement. If that was not possible . . . well, she would see.

"Anyway," he was saying, "we'll make the most of the few days we have. There are some things we *must* see together. . . . It's fine that we met, isn't it?"

She felt his hand take hers and she did not draw away. She even leaned toward him a little. Perhaps he would kiss her now. She hoped that he would. But he did not. He only held her hand warmly in his, with a little stroking movement of the fingers.

Something in her thoughts brought back once more that old self, that made her afraid. She rose abruptly. "It's so very late!"

He did not urge her to stay. He walked beside her back to her little hotel. Outside the door she opened her purse again.

"I've still got the change from dinner," he protested.

"But that's not enough! Do you suppose I want you wandering around the streets all night? . . . Here, take this! Will that be enough for a room somewhere?"

He laughed. "What kind of a hotel do you think I patronize? I could get *three* rooms for that."

"Well, it's better always to have a little extra."

"I don't like to take it, though. After all, what do you know about me? I might be a crook of some sort. Paris is full of them."

"I'll take the chance," she said gaily.

"Will you be here tomorrow . . . so that I can return the money?"

"What time?"

"That's just it. You see, I can't tell what time that cable . . ."

"Oh, *any* time," she said.

"And if I don't get here by dawn," he urged with mock seriousness, "you mustn't begin to think I've absconded."

"By ten o'clock, if you aren't here, I'll notify the police." It was the first playful thing she had ever said to any man.

Their hand-clasp held for a moment.

"Good night," he said gently.

"Good night."

Then he swung away into the darkness, and she hurried down the short hall and climbed, for the very first time without a halt for breath, the four flights to her bedroom.

All the next day she scarcely dared leave the hotel. He might come at any minute. And it was so hard to make

the girl at the desk understand. If he should come while she was out, and leave a message, it might never reach her.

She waited for her mid-day meal until two o'clock, then hurried out to the nearest café. Even from the door of the hotel, as she came breathlessly back, she could see that there was nothing in the pigeon-hole with her key. She tried to find out from the girl if any one had come asking for her; but it was hopeless. She went upstairs feeling that he *had* come, that they had failed to let her know. All afternoon, when he did not come, hour after hour, she clung to that thought: he had come and left some message.

She was oppressed with the sense of flying time. Only three days left for Paris! And one of them wasted like this! Oh, why hadn't she told him not to wait for the cablegram? What did that matter, when they might have been together?

In the early evening she went again to the café at the corner for a cup of chocolate and a brioche. Back at the hotel she once more summoned all her scanty French to try to draw from the girl at the desk something more than a mocking stare and an uninterested shrug. For there was still no word in her letter-box. The whole day gone, and time flying so, flying, flying.

She sat up late, waiting for a knock at her door. Whenever footsteps came along the hall, she leaned forward, listening. But no one came. . . . Something must have happened. So many things could happen, in a city like this. How would she ever know what had held him away from her? There was only one thing she could think of doing. She could go to Cook's office in the morning. He had spoken of waiting for his message there. If he were not there himself, she might learn how to find him. She could say it was a friend she was asking for. She *must* find him, for surely his money had not come, and he would be needing her. She knew that he would not come

to her again, asking for help. That was what made waiting a torment. It was very hard to lie there, unsleeping, through the precious wasted hours.

In the morning, at Cook's office, her shy uncertain inquiries took her from one department to another, facing, across wide counters and through metal wickets, a series of cool aloof young men. They could say nothing to aid her; they had no record, no memory of the man she named.

"A friend . . . a friend . . .," she stammered anxiously to one after another. There must have been something in her face that softened for an instant the official dignity of one of the young men. "Have you tried the American Express?" he suggested. "This matter may be in their hands."

Along the Boulevard de la Madeleine she jostled people on the sidewalk, was caught between streams of traffic at the cross-streets, was drawn back once by a frowning gentleman from the path of a darting taxicab. 'That was it,' she kept saying to herself. 'I had forgotten: he must have said the American Express.' But all the while something was drawing tighter around her heart.

And now, across another counter, she was facing still another young man. But the response was unchanged: "No, ma'am. No such name on our list."

This young man was an American. He wanted to be helpful to his compatriot, here in a strange city.

"Did this man tell you he was cabling for money?"

She felt her face flaming. But she said, "Yes." She had to go through with the thing now.

"What sort of a looking fellow was he?"

She gave a stammered description.

"That sounds a good deal like the man we've been hearing a lot about," he told her. "He's a pretty smooth article, but we've got the police on his trail. . . You want to look out, though. Paris is full of crooks like him."

She was out on the sidewalk now. She stood there a while with the crowds surging past her. Then she turned slowly to walk away. Where should she go? It didn't matter. There was nothing more to ask now. She knew. She walked on dully, anywhere.

On one street she passed the window of the company whose tour she would join in another day. She remembered how she had thought of giving up the trip, to stay here in Paris. She tried to laugh.

Back at the hotel, she felt her heart jump when she saw something white in her letter-box. She almost ran to have it in her hand. It was a letter from one of the teachers, back at home. She put it aside. She couldn't read it now.

The next day there was fortunately packing to do. She left her room only for a few minutes at the hours of meals. Whenever she was on the street she remembered, with bitterness and humiliation, how her steps had taken her, day after day, to the Pont des Arts.

The group that she joined next morning was a large one. She could feel herself comfortably lost within it. The rumble and rattle of the train and the unrolling simple landscape held further soothing. Paris was soon far behind, and her new self that she had found there. She was now an American school teacher travelling with others of her kind.

One of their first stops was Geneva. While the others went sight-seeing, she took a lake steamer to Lausanne. He had said that he was enrolled at the University of Lausanne.

Her heart was beating painfully when she went into the office at the university. If only they would tell her that he *was* a student here.

But it was the same answer as before. His name was not on the lists. She might have known.

She went out calmly. Something of the sting was passing now. The memory was growing remote. She had

once been in Paris and there she had known a man who interested her, and then disappointed her. That was all. It had happened long ago.

The group went on through Switzerland, down into Italy.

"Have you been here before?" her travelling companions asked her.

"No."

"But you are so *calm* about it all!"

If she was calm in the face of wonders it was because a greater wonder than all the rest had failed of its promise to her. But now, more and more, she was remembering the promise and forgetting its failure of fulfillment. She talked much of Paris, wherever they happened to be. "You and your Paris!" the others began to taunt her.

"She must have a friend there!" one of the coarser ones said one day with a leer.

She smiled quietly, withdrawn in her inner world. Yes, she had a friend there. She had left a very great deal behind.

When the tour was drawing to its close, she gave up the final offered glimpses of Holland and Belgium, to return to Paris. She wanted her last days of Europe to be spent there. She wanted to sit again on the Pont des Arts.

She sat on the bridge in the evening of the last day. She sat there in the twilight and felt the sturdy pressure of an arm against her shoulder. When it grew dark she felt a hand clasp about her own.

Tomorrow she was leaving. She might never come back. But she would remember. She would always love Paris.

TWO POEMS

By FREDERICK TEN HOOR

BITTER AND RED BERRIES

These red berries are well-tempered fruit,
Sweetened by cultivation; pluck and eat.
For we have evolved from the dark brute
Whose hands were hooves, whose speech a whimpering
bleat.

These are red berries, eat and let the mind
Trouble no longer; here is sugared food
And the frail body need no longer find
Savage satiety in the running blood.

And these are bitter berries; if you touch,
Venom will enter you like a wild desire.
You shall remember and shall covet much
Of what was banished with water and with fire.

TO BE DEAD

Not in the valley, where my labor makes
Money for others, for myself a living,
Nor on the hilltop, where my soul takes
Beauty to bed and wakes to know misgiving,

Is the reality I seek. All that I do
Is pattern and conformity, a moving
To escape the weary man within who
Dares to deny even the fun of loving.

Labor of hands is idle labor, spent
To silence question. And the proud mind
Finding no answer troubles to invent
Tales which deceive only the willing blind.

Seeing there is no answer to be had
From self and less from others, I begin
To wonder what it means — to be dead.
Will the dust's going usher beauty in?

TWO POEMS

By RUTH EVELYN HENDERSON

BOY ON AN ERRAND

He sprinted twenty steps, progressed seven
On a one-leg hop, and side-skipped three,
Went kangaroo leaping ten or eleven,
And chinned himself on the limb of a tree.

Not looking around, he ran straight back,
Then tight-rope-starred on a handy curb;
He took a high hurdle over a crack
In the cement walk. His form was superb.

He pranced to the tune of his pocket comb;
In somebody's yard, he stood on his head.
His mother asked: "Did you come straight home?"
"Yes, mother. — I took a few curves," he said.

PRIMITIVE-WISE

None but a boy,
Whose rough clothes smell of outdoor fires, can know
Adventures pervasive in autumn dusk;
A boy, whose boots kick up from mulch, below
The rustle of this year's leaves,
A reminiscence of musk.

None but a boy retrieves
From sombre lead and old gold weighting the sky,

From russet tinge of moist, enfolding air,
The ancestral, distant why
For huddling close to a bonfire;
Feels harmonies between the homing flare
Of auto lights or the reassuring glow
Of early boulevard lamps, and his outdoor fire:
Primitive-wise, divines what he cannot know.

For who but a boy,
As the pearl of the half-moon glistens white
In the deepening velvet nap of the night,
Hears like a dream a wolf's far howl to the pack,
And shivers with needing to look behind his back;
Breathes with a frightening loudness,
Puckers his brow,
Sniffs at enclosing darkness,
Forgets the now
And the here, halloos to some dim mate
And huddles down in his coat, till echo
Finding its way from nearby walls
To an instant of silence, eerily calls
That she will wait?

Or who but a boy will sprint through the rush-hour crowd
With wolves and winter silent upon his heels,
There in the loud
Clangor of trolleys and rasp of brakes, to find
The safety of home and dinner;
But gratefully safe in his home will slump down, blind
To the queries of tolerant looks, his eyes gone dark
With a something ages old,
A something stark!

THE SKETCH BOOK

THE PLAY'S THE THING

By IRMA SIMONTON

The second hour of bridge is always an agony for me, a black and red agony of absurd shifting patterns like the cover of a modern poetry magazine.

The first hour is as pleasurable as those pills that highbrow doctors give their patients to put them to sleep at night. It's a stupid, numbing pleasure: pleasure in the power of bidding, in the craft of selecting the proper card, and in the delicious abandon of flinging a three-spot upon a trick already won by one's partner.

Then, gradually thoughts come creeping unbidden into one's head, until one is a storehouse, waiting, charged with sensuous impressions, half-forgotten memories all overlaid by those senseless shifting patterns.

Grover has despired of me in that respect. He still insists that I attend parties, in the vague and practically baseless hope that some day I will develop an interest in the game.

"Grover," I said earnestly before our last party, "if people should come here and find us playing with the children's blocks on the living-room floor, do you think we'd be considered insane?"

"It's likely," Grover grunted, pulling at his bow-tie and raising his chin ridiculously high as he stood before the mirror. "What in God's name has that . . ."

I waved a powder puff to silence him. "Well, there you have my reaction to bridge. Except," I went on, "that there's a lot more appeal about solid blocks with a different picture on all six sides, than there is about two-dimensional kings and queens with vapid faces."

Grover gave me a look indicative of profound distrust. He would have kept it turned on me indefinitely, like a

spotlight, but he had to bend over a chair to polish up his shoes with my big woolly brush.

"It is," he began, to the steady whack of the shoe-brush, "it is mathematical delicatessen, a thinker's holiday, and it is based upon a profound sense for calculation."

"Yes," I said, "so is being cashier in a chop-house, only that isn't in style."

The door to the bathroom slammed shut. I had no audience.

Now we were suffering at Anne Frances Karb's apartment. I was just beginning to have that deadly boredom that is like a drug. I surveyed Ernst Kroom's massive head, his great glowing eyes intent upon those scraps of paper. Whenever he looked across at me, they seemed to comprehend all of my dissatisfaction. My wrath mounted when I thought of the beautiful conversation he must be capable of, the rich idiom and delicate balance of "Runaway," his great three-volume novel.

What a figure! In a casual way, he did resemble the king of clubs, even to a fringe of beard around his chin. But there was nothing vapid about Ernst Kroom's face. It looked inspired. His big frame seemed too heavy for the slender chair. He overbalanced everything in the room.

Just the second-hand gossip about his past, his philosophy, his acceptance and repudiation of communism, his Egyptian experience, his tragic affair with the actress Alisa Logan, was stirring. It made you want to fling down your cards and say, "Talk, Ernst Kroom! Whatever can this absurd playing mean to you?"

It was a waste of a divine material for him to gloom hugely over his cards. I wanted to hear that resonant voice caressing strange names, telling of far-away places and the things that he had dreamed there.

The immediate result was that I flung a small trump

upon a trick that Grover was taking with a king of clubs. Grover looked over at me with the patient expression of a man who has realized too late that the woman he married can never approach his ideal. I apologized by raising my eyebrows and looking timidly out from under them.

Grover, you knew, would rather do anything than "just talk." He plays cards as he works, neat and unruffled, with his blue-green eyes narrowed and his brow wrinkled. He always looks just what he is — pleasant and efficient and dependable.

I looked interestedly at Anne Frances, pretty and cat-like in the lamplight. Given her intellectual powers minus her sex-appeal, and you got a flat zero. Her light brown hair strayed, her blackened eyelashes curled, and her mouth pouted. She was enormously flattered to be having ever-so-slight an affair with a literary giant. She could play an acceptable hand of bridge.

But I could continue the farce no longer. I stirred in my chair restlessly and Ernst Kroom looked across the table. His eyes spoke their sympathy.

"Have a cigarette?" he said.

"Oh, Anne Frances," I said, breathless with eagerness to be through with fooling, "let's not play. I'm simply going to sleep over my cards."

I flung them down in a heap on the table. Anne Frances and Grover, accustomed to my vagaries, looked at me without surprise, and laid down their hands.

Ernst Kroom, from whom I expected applause for my courage, glowed strangely at me from enigmatic eyes. He looked at the ceiling and the clock. He smiled helplessly. He clung to his cards.

"But Mrs. Coyne," he said with a slight shrug of magnificent shoulders, "what else, then, shall we do?"

THE RAIN

By LEO L. WARD

He kept staring through the window against which the rain was beating. Between the little streams rushing and mingling downward over the glass, he watched the apple tree in the yard. Its thin top branches bent and swayed under the wind and the rain, as great sheets of water swooped and bellied slantingly out of a sky he could nowhere see, flinging themselves headlong over the tree and the barn and the blurred grayness of the land beyond.

Something seemed suddenly to twist and tighten all the lines of his face, and the rough, hard cheeks were lifted until little wrinkles pushed themselves up against the sockets of his eyes.

Here it was the first of May, and nary a furrow ploughed in the fields. . . . He ought to been in the fields two weeks ago. . . .

His gaze fixed itself upon the upper branches of the apple tree, and a little while later it went out straining through the swinging rain that hid, then revealed the gray-black fields behind the barn.

Suddenly the paint brush in his lifted hand shifted and fell slightly backwards. He felt it pressing heavily against the butt of his thumb. He looked down at the sticky greenish thing drooping from his fingers.

The painting began again, with intermittent swishing and slapping sounds. Ligg Morrisy was stooping beneath the window, beside the baseboard that ran along the edge of blue and yellow linoleum. As he went on painting he lifted his left hand automatically and rested it on the window sill.

After some time the swishing and slapping stopped, and the man rose to look intently out the window again. Two or three green finger prints showed on the dull yellow of the window sill at his knees.

The twisted lines still pressed up against his eyes, which, between their narrowed lids, were as dull and gray as the tree and the barn and the land beyond.

He heard a faint rustling behind him. The rustling came close to him, and yet it seemed far behind him still, separate and distant, and far away from him, and far away from the rushing of the wind outside and the hollow rattle of rain against the window. There was a pressure at his arm. He stepped slightly aside.

The face of his wife, pink and flushed against the grayness, looked up at him around the smooth curve of his shoulder.

"Ligg, what *are* you doing?" The voice was suddenly sharp and close in his ear. "Just look at them marks on that sill. . . . Ligg . . . Oh, why don't you look at what you're doing?"

Before he could answer she had rustled away and was back with an oily rag, rubbing the paint marks from the sill. He saw her dark head nodding and shaking over the sill. She was gone again. He gazed out as before at the silver blur of rain and land. The silver had grown darker. It seemed very bluish and very cold.

Vaguely he heard a clacking and clattering behind him . . . then the deadened bang of an oil stove lid . . . a hard metallic scraping and tapping. . . The noises became vaguer still, very remote and very far behind him. Then he heard only the rain sweeping past the window.

He remembered the oats sowing. He had got it in in good shape this spring. Dark green in spots, even two weeks ago. His eyes widened and brightened momentarily, then became dull and narrow as before as he again began peering intently through the cold, blue window.

Suddenly the rain came in streaming, beating torrents, completely hiding the barn and the land. . .

He thought of the corn, and his mind was instantly sharp and clear . . . not a furrow ploughed anywhere in the fields. His face was again a mask, in which the

wrinkles crawled and twisted and then settled, very hard and deep, under his eyes.

After a while — it seemed a very long while — he heard the woman talking to him from the kitchen. She was saying something about getting done before supper. He felt the paint sticky and clammy between his fingers. He lifted his head stiffly and peered more intently through the rain, but he was thinking about the voice out in the kitchen. . . . Just what she wanted, fussing around inside the house . . . him in out of the fields, painting and cleaning. She didn't seem to care about things. . . . She never thought about the corn. . . . He heard the rain still pouring against the window. . . .

He went out to the kitchen and silently put the paint bucket under a table, then picked up a crumpled hat and a coat from behind the stove. The feel of the coat almost startled him. It was dry and stiff. As he put on the coat he mumbled something about doing the chores. A sharp hard rattle of the doorknob, and the man went quickly out into the storm.

As he crossed to the barn the rain beat at him, pressing the clothes against his body. But it came in unsteady sweeps now, not so heavily as he had seen it falling all afternoon. As he stood reaching for the latch inside the feedway door the wind seemed to cease suddenly. For a moment there was a hush in the air about him. He heard the hollow pecking of raindrops on the crown of his hat. Then the wind came again in a quick violent gust, blowing the rain against the side of his face as he stepped into the barn.

He heard the startled whimpering and neighing of horses as he stumbled through the hay in the feedway. The corn felt firm and hard and strangely dry in his hands, when he dropped it into the feed-boxes. He heard the horses munching and fumbling the ears in the boxes.

When he came to the feedway door again the rain was

blowing, thin and fine, between the barn and the house. It was hardly more than a heavy mist now, shifting and tossing wildly on the wind. And the wind itself was not so fierce or steady. Between gusts, it seemed to stop and gasp at the corners of the barn. As he stood for a minute or two in the door, his wet face shiny in the dusk, he knew the storm was broken.

Then far past the apple tree and the low roof of the house he saw a finger of red light pushing itself along the wet bluish fields. It was a cold, limpid red, like flame seen through ice. Slowly it spread and widened, livid at its center and green and purple and gold along the shifting edges of clouds. Then his gaze came back to the little house. Its roof was wet and shiny in the reflected light. The apple tree had become a great round patch of crimson lace with darker ribs of trunk and upper limbs.

As he walked slowly toward the house the rent of dead flame moved upward in zig-zag slashes, and the clouds above it shifted and pulled gradually apart. Before he had got to the house little patches of deep blue, fringed with pink, had appeared in the upper sky. He stood for a while with a hand resting on the knob, his face reflecting the dull red glow, before turning indifferently and pushing the door inward with his shoulder.

As he stepped into the kitchen his eye fell upon the two shiny red handles of the warming ovens. Even the fat black curve of pipe above the stove glowed dully in the light that poured through the uncurtained window and filled the little room.

His wife was bending over the oil-cloth table near the window, pouring fried potatoes from a skillet into a small white bowl. Loose strands of her hair had been turned to fine gold by the light from the window.

"Through?" she asked, without turning.

"Yeah, all through," Ligg said, dropping a wet coat and hat behind the stove. The woman began scraping some scorched potatoes from the bottom of the skillet.

He went on into the dining room, to the window. The apple tree and the barn were now in a dead, even light. Farther away the greening oats fields had been changed into a thin frail gold.

. . . Maybe he could get to ploughing in a few days, by end of the week anyway. . . If he could get somebody . . . like Tob Jennings. . . Put a gang and a sulky into it, wouldn't take so long. . . Yeah, ought to get Tob or somebody . . .

He heard the rustling of a dress behind him, then the sound of a dish pushed across the cloth on the table.

"Here, come on now, supper's ready . . . Ligg." His wife's voice was light and careless, the way it always was when she was busy. Usually he didn't like to hear her talk that way, but now he didn't seem to mind it.

Once, when he was reaching for the potatoes his eyes noticed green rawish paint around his finger nails, but he only stared absently at it for a moment. The woman talked almost constantly through the meal . . . "blue . . . think light blue would be better for the kitchen . . . papering . . . seen some awful nice pink and green designs in at Norton's the other Saturday . . . bedroom needs it pretty bad too. . . ." He heard her voice running on carelessly, without ever seeming to stop. . . .

If he could get Tob. Tob could do the harrowin' too. Wouldn't want to put Tob on the planter. . . . Want to make sure of a good check in corn. . . . He took another piece of salt ham.

He could hear the woman's voice . . . still something about papering . . . but the voice seemed to stay on the other side of the table, where the woman was. . . . At times he did not hear it at all. Once in a while, when she bent over her plate, he noticed how white and thin and straight was the part that ran back in the middle of her dark hair. . . .

He pushed away from the table, moving the chair alternately on its two hind legs, then tilted himself back against the wall. Absently he watched and heard the woman clearing the table, while he pulled a pipe from his pocket with an awkward swaying and hunching of shoulders. The smoke came regularly in whitish, faintly bluish clouds, and he watched each of these intently until it disappeared.

He was thinking that he had better go over and see Tob the first thing in the morning. . . . Yeah, sulky and gang together . . . that was what he'd better do.

THERE IS STILL TIME

By WILLIAM CLOSSON EMORY

Let your laughter ring.
You will not see the slow
creep of the ice down the black
crags seeking to cover with hard
lust the sterile wastes of prairies.
You will not hear the last
cocoanut snap from its brittle
thong and fall with a sharp
bright clang to the glistening sand.
You will not feel the dull
red coal of the sun glowing
dismally in the dark womb of the sky.
You will not know that the stupid
forms stagger drunkenly from
the engine rooms while the carbons
wail against the weary commutators
and the lights flicker and die.
There is still time for mirth.

I'VE BEEN READING —

By JOHN T. FREDERICK

THE CHARM OF OLD MAGAZINES

Reviewing a book by a close friend and a co-editor might easily become, under some circumstances, an embarrassing and unpleasant task. But it is a delightful privilege when one is so enthusiastic about the book in question as I am in my reading of Frank Luther Mott's *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (Appleton, \$10.00). I do not intend to speak to MIDLAND readers of the scholarly aspect of this book — though it is a most impressive achievement in scholarship, in the as yet too little explored or appreciated field of American literary history. I want rather to convey something of the essentially literary character of this book itself. Mr. Mott has done his work not only with a scholar's thoroughness and patience, but with a born writer's recognition of human values, and with a remarkable variety and vitality in the writing itself. The result is that in the pages of his book past generations come alive for us — in the vividly sketched personalities and careers of early editors, in the amazingly concrete and fascinating accounts of the contents of early magazines and their relation to the thoughts, habits, ideals of the colonies and the young nation. The beginnings of advertising, of regional literature, of all that has entered largely into American writing and American thought, Mr. Mott has traced clearly and surely in his study of the multitudinous and various magazines that gave expression to a developing people. His book is an invaluable contribution to the study of American literature and American life. Beyond that, it is a fine literary achievement in itself.

PAST AND PRESENT

I have been reading with very keen interest some of the recent discussions of the relations of man and industry in modern times, and reflecting as I have read on the parallelism between these books and certain utterances of the preceding century. There is a highly suggestive field for study here. I hope later on in a fuller discussion to set beside such findings of the Victorians as are expressed in Carlyle's *Past and Present*, in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, in William Morris's *Lectures on Art and Industry*, the conclusions drawn by thoughtful students of contemporary life in 1929 and 1930: James Truslow Adams's *Our Business Civilization*, (Boni, \$3.00); Stuart Chase's *Prosperity, Fact or Myth* (Charles Boni, The Paper Books); and Edward J. O'Brien's *The Dance of The Machines* (Macaulay, \$2.50). For the present I can only suggest that the parallels exist, and

commend the study of them to the attention of MIDLAND readers.

Of these new books attempting to ascertain what industrialism is doing to humanity, Mr. Adams's volume is a collection of urbane, well-written, and highly provocative essays, most of which have appeared in leading magazines. Mr. Chase's book is a positive, rapid study of the actual data of incomes and expenditures, of production and consumption, which afford some—though not all—of the criteria for the proposed inquiry. Mr. Chase's writing shows an admirable union of vigor and candor. His book is distinctly worth reading and pondering. Most interesting of the three to me, however, and to most readers of THE MIDLAND, I suspect, is Mr. O'Brien's *Dance of The Machines*. Mr. O'Brien's book begins with the arresting hypothesis that the machines are already dominant in American life, and that human beings more and more are becoming the creatures, the servants, of the machines. This hypothesis is supported by an amazing body of concrete evidence, skilfully organized and presented in a candid, personal style that is peculiarly suited to the writer's purpose. Mr. O'Brien then applies the whole force of his findings to an analytical study of the American short story—a concrete presentation of the effect which the machines have had upon this one art form. The result is a book which no thoughtful writer or reader of short stories can afford to miss.

SOME NEW NOVELS

It is a long time since I have been so much excited by any first novel, or any American novel, as I am by Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* (Scribner, \$2.50). I am at this writing just half way through its six hundred pages. Hence I am in no position to review it; my judgment must be very definitely a suspended judgment. I allowed for reading and reviewing it what I thought would be ample time; but I found that it is a book which refuses to get read in a hurry. It is so richly poetic and so meaty with reality of character and experience that each page must be savored, thought over. The author sometimes exasperates me, much more frequently delights me, always impresses me as very far above the ordinary rank and file of literary journeymen. I shall write again of *Look Homeward, Angel* four months from now, when I again contribute this department to THE MIDLAND. Meanwhile, I urge MIDLAND readers to get the book and read it for themselves—at least the first three hundred pages!

Oregon Detour (Payson, Clarke, \$2.50), by Nard Jones, is a regional novel of vitality and interest, though it contains elements which tend to become conventional. The ill-adjusted school teacher in the small town, Florence Larson, and the unappreciated and "escaping" youth, Lester Adams, might very

well have been spared. They are too much the stock characters of most regional novels since *Main Street*. But Etta and Charlie and Peg and Swede, who remain in their Oregon community of Creston and fight out their battles with the soil and with their own impulses, are real and significant. The strength of the book lies in the humaneness and individualness of these characters, and in the force with which their dynamic relationships are brought home to the reader — qualities which show that very real possibilities of achievement lie before Mr. Jones. The unsatisfying thing about the book, to me, is the relative poverty of realization of place, and the absence of any real sense of the farm life and occupations of these who are said to be farm people.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

An extremely interesting and valuable book for young children is Lydia J. Trowbridge's *Betty of the Consulate* (Doubleday, Doran, \$2.00). This book grew out of Mrs. Trowbridge's memories of her own experiences as the little daughter of an American consul in China, in the days of the old empire before the Orient began to turn modern. Into a well built and credible plot which will hold childish interest strongly Mrs. Trowbridge has woven a wealth of vivid and authentic presentation of that older China. Chinese stories and legends, accounts of Chinese festivals and of journeys and varied adventures, combine to make this a book full of richly imaged experiences for boys and girls. It is unusually well written, too — a book definitely to be recommended.

Few events in American history seem to me quite so dramatic as the capture, by George Rogers Clark and his handful of frontiersmen, of the British fort at Vincennes, one hundred and fifty years ago. The story is well told for boys by Lowell Thomas in *The Hero of Vincennes* (Houghton, Mifflin, \$2.50). This version is commendable in that it is accurate, is based upon adequate research, and avoids senseless idealization of Clark. I could wish, however, that it were a little more warmly written. I feel that not all of the drama of the events narrated will be realized by the boy who reads this book.

SOME RECENT POETRY

The maturing poetic ability of Glenn Ward Dresbach is known to readers of *THE MIDLAND* through the rather frequent samples of his work which appear in this magazine. There can be no doubt that his new volume, *The Wind in the Cedars* (Henry Holt, \$2.00), marks a definite advance over his earlier work. I feel this especially in the department of sonnets, in which it seems to me Dresbach presents a most impressive achievement in this most challenging of poetic forms. There is a fine example

of his narrative verse, also — a part of Dresbach's work in which I am always especially interested — in "A trace of Gold." I feel that the longer "Fifty Sacks of Corn" is less successful, in spite of its arresting material. Some of the lyrics are marvelously sure and delicate. None of them show any faltering of the craftsman's hand. There is a fine certainty in Dresbach's work. He knows precisely what he wants to do; and he is advancing steadily and surely toward the achievement of all his aims.

Another writer with whose name subscribers to THE MIDLAND are acquainted is Marjorie Allen Seiffert. Her latest book of poems, *The King With Three Faces* (Scribner, \$2.00), in spite of the fine achievement of much of its contents, gives me a strange sense of uncertain questioning, almost of frustration and keen anxiety. Perhaps this is due in part to the ending of the long title poem, which after its rich and meaningful pageantry ends sharply, harshly, with a great question unanswered. Perhaps it is due to Mrs. Seiffert's recurring attention to some of the most persistent and most difficult problems of modern life — that of the changing conception of the moral code, for example. Whatever the cause, this book gives me inescapably the impression of a strong and finely sensitive poetic talent, conscious of high reaches of achievement possible for it and not yet attained, and not quite sure of the way of attainment.

I am reluctant and sorry to confess that I like best in Louise Bogan's *Dark Summer* (Scribner, \$2.50) the poems that are reprinted from her volume of seven years ago, *Body of This Death*. That was a book of poems not to be forgotten. Her work in *Dark Summer* is even more highly individual: close-packed, intense, sombre, attaining a marvelously delicate balance between objective and subjective experience. But her verse seems to me now to grow heavy, to lose its fine muscular vitality under the weight of her desperate attempt to render quite fully, quite accurately, the last shadowed margin of experience or idea. It is work of no ordinary quality, however. I know that I shall return to it. Perhaps I shall like it better.

Most of the "revolutionary" verse which I have seen in the last few years has impressed me as of very slight interest — the feeble attempt to attract attention of self-invited guests who have arrived too late. (No, I am not speaking of Cummings, who seems to me, when he wants to be, one of the three or four best poets of our time.) A very definite exception to this general feeling I find in *be still* by William Closson Emory (The Lotus Press, Detroit, \$2.50). The discarding of punctuation and capitalization in the title poem — a confused dream of the War, dreamed by a father sleeping in his child's room — is definitely justified by the poet's purpose. The result is one of the few American poems about the War which seem to me worth remembering. The somewhat less unconventional form of the

other war poems is similarly justified. Mr. Emory's work as presented here is uneven. Even this slender volume might have been still more slender without loss to his reputation. But most of it is solidly individual.

I do not feel competent to criticize the more definitely religious poems in Charles L. O'Donnell's *A Rime of the Rood and Other Poems* (Longmans, Green, \$2.00), though I can testify that all of them are genuine poetry — that religious emotion and experience are rendered in verse beautiful and alive. Of the less strictly religious poems I feel myself moved to speak with what may seem extravagance, so great is my enjoyment of them. Father O'Donnell's work seems to me to unite the delicacy of extreme poetic sensitiveness with the surprising strength of absolute sincerity. I value his work very highly indeed.

BIOGRAPHICAL

CLIFFORD BRAGDON is a teacher of English at Hawken School, Cleveland, Ohio. Although he has had a few poems published, this is his first story to appear in print.

HANIEL LONG, now living in Santa Fé, New Mexico, has contributed poems to THE MIDLAND and other magazines.

THOMAS MURTHA, whose home is in Warton, Ontario, is well known to readers of THE MIDLAND. His last story appeared in the number for March-April, 1929.

ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY lives in San Francisco, California. His work has been published in previous issues of THE MIDLAND.

ROBERT HUNT is a resident of New York City, where he is connected with Doubleday, Doran. He is the author of *The Advertising Parade*, and has been a contributor of poetry to several magazines.

RUTH EVELYN HENDERSON has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND, and to the poetry magazines. Her home is in Washington, D. C.

GLENN WARD DRESBACH lives in Chicago, Illinois. His work is well known to readers of American poetry.

FREDERICK TEN HOOR has contributed previously to THE MIDLAND. His "Winter Poems" appeared in the last issue.

IRMA SIMONTON is a young New York writer, now living in Florida.

FATHER LEO L. WARD is a teacher of English at the University of Notre Dame. He has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND.

WILLIAM CLOSSON EMORY, whose home is in Detroit, Michigan, has contributed verse and prose sketches to several American and European magazines.

